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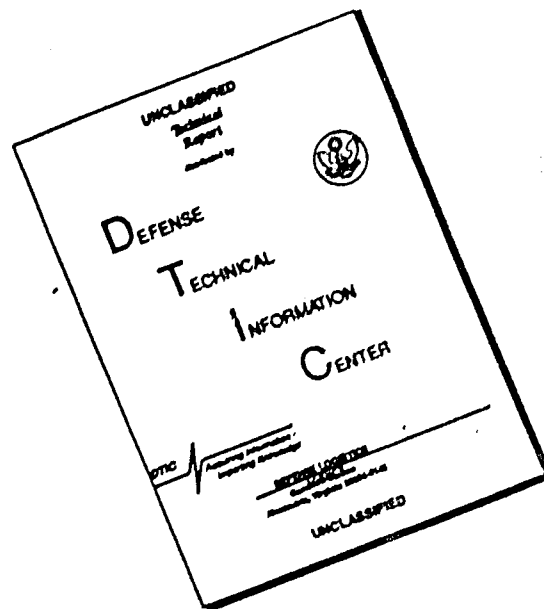
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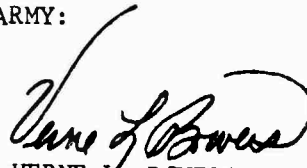
SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report: LTC Robert W. Lockridge, Jr.,  
Province Senior Advisor, Long An Province, MR-3, RVN, 21 May 1971 -  
20 February 1973 (U)

AD 525408

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1. Reference: AR 525-14, Senior Officer Debriefing Report (U), 2 July 1971.
2. Transmitted herewith is the report of, LTC Robert W. Lockridge, Jr., subject as above.
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## BASIC DATA

Name: Robert W. Lockridge, Jr.

Grade: Lieutenant Colonel

PII Redacted

Branch of Service: Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army

Province: Long An, MR-3, RVN

Inclusive dates of Tour: 21 May 1971 to 20 February 1973

Reassignment date: 20 February 1973

Previous Vietnam Tours: (1) No 64-May 65, Detachment Commander  
A-334, US Special Forces.  
Dak To Camp, Kontum, RVN  
(2) No 66 - Nov 67; Special staff officer,  
US Special Forces, Nha Trang, Khanh Hoe, RVN

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## GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. (U) What background did you have for your position?

Two previous tours of duty in Vietnam plus the fact that I have spent considerable time in the Far East, i.e. I spent four years as a child in Japan, served a military tour in Korea and another in Okinawa.

2. (U) What training did you have for this position?

Approximately nine months of schooling at the Foreign Service Institute, Department of State, Washington, D.C.

3. (U) What additional training would you suggest for your position?

Possibly more language training and definately more training on the history and culture of the country.

4. (U) What should be the length of tour for your position?

At least 18 months, but preferably two years.

5. (U) Was support from Region and or Saigon satisfactory?

Support from Region the first nine months I thought was responsive. However, subsequent to a number of personnel changes, the support received during the last half of my tour was excellent. I had little cause to ask for support from Saigon except in economics. I felt this support was only satisfactory.

6. (U) Were any programs delayed because support was not forthcoming?

No

7. (U) Do the reporting requirements as set forth in joint directive 2-69 provide a means for reporting all information of present and future value? Yes, see section III.

8. (U) Do the MACCORDS management information system field reporting requirements set forth in directive 2-69 adequately measure progress in pacification programs?

To a limited extent, see section III

9. (U) Were instructions from higher headquarters clear with no conflicting requirements?

Yes, much more so than I would have expected.

10 (U) The most clearly defined and directed programs are:

- a. Village self development
- b. Public works
- c. Education

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11. (U) The most effective para-military forces are:
  - a. RF Battalions
  - b. RF Groups
  - c. Field police forces
- 12 (U) The most successful pacification programs are:
  - a. Land Reform
  - b. Village self development
  - c. Agriculture
- 13 (U) The programs that have the greatest impact upon the pacification effort are:
  - a. Land Reform
  - b. Public works
  - c. Education
14. (U) The least successful pacification programs are:
  - a. Peoples information
  - b. Protection of the people against terrorism
  - c. Chieu Hoi
15. (U) The programs that have the least impact on the pacification program are:
  - a. Post and communications
  - b. Labor and manpower
  - c. Administrative reform
16. (C) The rural people (are) (are/not) aware of the pacification efforts the US and GVN are making.

The people are generally aware of the efforts for high impact programs and vaguely aware of others. The reason for this low level of awareness is simply the failure of VIS (see section III), and the reluctance on the part of the senior province officials to spend any significant amount of time in face-to-face contact with the people.

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17. (C) The people, as you know them, are (more) (Less) committed to the GVN than when you assumed your job. Why?

Much more committed to the GVN. This is due to many causes combined. For example, the increased security and the land-reform program have had dramatic effects. But the public health, education and public works programs have contributed significantly. Because of a combination of some programs and IR-22 rice, the rice crop has exceeded anything in the history of Long An. This has brought prosperity and independence such as these people have never before had. On the other end of the scale, the North Vietnamese invasion into Long An, the VC winter campaign of 1972 and the total disregard for the people shown by the VC immediately after the cease-fire have caused a dramatic shift to the GVN.

18. (U) Do you feel that the pacification plan is sufficiently detailed to provide guidance and set goals that will result in security and growth of Vietnam?

The national plan is better than the province plan, but in both there is too much emphasis on goals rather than guidance. The time between the publishing of the national plan and the submission of the province plan is entirely too short. At province there is no time to give thought to the plan. There is generally sufficient time to prepare each program, but there is absolutely no time for the senior province officials to think about the plan as a whole before it is published. Thus there was little other than goals in the plan.

19. (U) Do you feel the pacification plan was adequately communicated and explained to you and your counterpart?

No. Prior to the publication of the national plan, region had a planning conference to explain the plan. However, details were so sketchy that it was not much help. Province officials were faced with the same situation. Once the plan was published, it was simply a mad dash to publish our plan.

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## TERRITORIAL FORCES

1. (C) Long An Province has 58 RF Companies and 221 PF Platoons which equates to a combat strength in excess of 16,000 men. During the spring offensive of the Nguyen Hue Campaign, the territorial forces really came of age in Long An and more than proved their worth. As the NVA battalions moved into northern and central Long An, there was a real element of doubt by both the Province Chief and me as to how they would stand up against a unit of better organization and greater firepower. In actuality, the RF and NVA met head-on and were equally matched. US air strikes, however, tipped the balance in favor of the RF. Since this first campaign, the NVA have never again been a match for the RF. The RF, and to some degree the PF, have matured considerably, both tactically and professionally. In rating their performance, the RF battalions are at least equal to the better battalions in an ARVN division, and probably better than most.

2. (C) Administratively, significant improvements have been made for the territorial forces. Troops are all paid regularly and know what day of the month to expect their money. Uniforms are readily available, and the appearance of the individual soldier has improved significantly. Because of a stronger punishment procedure and a fairer method of troop unit relocation, the desertion rate has dropped to below allowable limits for the first time. Personnel records still exhibit some confusion, but not to the detriment of the overall force.

3. (C-NF) "Ghost-soldiering" still exists although this is more evident among the PF than the RF. In early 1972, this situation reached serious proportions in Can Giuoc. Binh Phuoc and especially Rach Kien where Major Cong was the DC. Due to pressure from the US Advisors, Major Cong was relieved from duty. His relief served warning on the Province Chief to the extent that much of the "ghost-soldiering" was eliminated - or at least hidden better. Today there is little evidence of this situation in Long An except in Can Giuoc. In that district, the defacto District Chief is the DC's wife who is absolutely money-mad and tyrannical. The Province Chief, although aware of the situation in Can Giuoc, is reluctant to do anything because of the District Chief's connections with JCS.

4. (C) The performance of the territorial forces is a direct reflection of unit leadership. Those units that have performed so well in the past 6-8 months all had their leadership selected personally by the Province Chief. As might be expected, performance in the remaining units was substandard. The problem of leadership in RVN has always been one of the basic shortcomings of the RVNAF. As far as I can determine, there really has been little improvement and really less initiative shown to try and improve the leadership. On numerous occasions I have presented plans for officers' calls, officer refresher training, etc., all to no avail. There is simply no interest at Province level to enhance the

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training of the junior officers. Likewise, from all I can determine, the senior officers seem to have no feeling of obligation for advising and counseling junior officers.

5. (C) Training of the individual soldier at unit level is both not understood and non-existent, except for psywar activities. Psywar activities down to company level are excellent. On the other hand, there is a strong feeling among the senior staff that a soldier receives his training in the basic training center. When the time comes for him to have additional training, he will go to unit training or individual refresher training at a training center. While on duty with his unit he receives all the experience he needs on routine unit operations. Of course such an approach is self-defeating. In my 22 months in Long An, I have never seen the RF units fire on a range, I have seen no crew-served weapons training and not tactical formation training - among many others. The individual South Vietnamese soldier is every bit as good as his northern counterpart. However, at the present time we have a large group of armed men placed in a quasi military organization. Their performance when properly led and told each step to take along the way is outstanding-but without additional sophistication on the part of the Vietnamese officer corps, we are a long way from a professional army.

6. (C) Logistics has been the area of greatest improvement. So many changes have been made in the supply system that it would be difficult to list them all. However, certainly one of the most significant has been the assignment of career logistics officers to sub-sector level, and the acceptance of such a career specialization among the RVNAF in general. This in no way implies there are no longer any logistics problems- there are many - but measured on a rate of improvement scale, logistics is far ahead of the other functional areas. Of the remaining and continuing problems, two of the greatest are maintenance and unit supply officer training. Maintenance is pathetic. Weapons are not properly cleaned and maintained although accountability is very good. Vehicles are generally driven until they fall apart with no first and second PM at all except to fill the gas tank. Signal equipment is not cleaned and in generally a poor state. Some of this is due to equipment shortages requiring full use of what is on hand, but mostly it stems from the fact that there is absolutely no sense of urgency or command emphasis on maintenance. Of course without unit training, as mentioned earlier, there is no way this situation can be corrected. Unit supply officers simply do not understand the supply system. At my insistence, one two-day training period was conducted and resulted in a measurable improvement. However, we have not been successful in fostering monthly supply conferences and training sessions. To say the least, they are sorely needed.

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7. (C) After viewing the PF in light of the changing military situation for almost two years, it appears to me that the PF can be disbanded once the cease-fire situation settles down. In fact, I think this should be a first-order-of-business item for the RVNAF. The PF have certainly played a key role in security of the population, and they have done their job well. However, I can no longer see the justification for 221 platoons in Long An. On the other hand, I do not think all of the PF spaces should be withdrawn from the province. Instead, approximately half of the spaces should be allocated for an increase in the Long An RF, and the remainder returned to JGS. A plan for the phase-down and general elimination of the PF was submitted by the Province Chief in January 72 to JGS. No definitive action was taken on this plan possibly because of more urgent demands on JGS due to the invasion and now the cease-fire. However, I believe a cursory review of the security situation in Long An more than justifies this concept, and the plan should be revived.

8. (C) On two separate occasions, we have tried to organize RF Engineer Companies from existing resources in Long An. It is certainly a fact that the GVN is weak when it comes to actually relating to the farmer in the field. To relate to the people, the GVN must be encouraged to do so with tangible evidence, and what better and cheaper way is there to do this than with the territorial forces. Thus, the requests for the Engineer Companies. In both cases our requests were disapproved, but the reasoning was weak. Such units are now being employed in MR4 and proving very successful. I think such a concept is going to be even more important in the future, and thought should be given to implementation.

9. (C) The RF River Boat Company is a duplication of the VN Navy's responsibility. Simply by having this unit present, the Province Chief calls on them for his waterborne operations and shuns the Navy. This has led to disastrous results on three occasions. As long as this unit is equipped with naval landing craft, the Province Chief can see no real requirement for detailed coordination and cooperation with the Navy. I believe one of two possible solutions is in order. First, take the naval craft from the RF and equip them instead with sampans. This type of craft is much more practical for the delta region anyway. A study of units of this type now employed in Kien Tuong Province might show the worth of this selection. The second solution is to disband the RF Boat Company and rely entirely on the Navy. I believe this is the preferable solution, and as a secondary goal would force coordination between the Army and the Navy.

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## NATIONAL POLICE

1. (U) Dramatic improvements have taken place in the National Police program over the past two years. Facilities have been improved, strength increased, communications enhanced and the beginnings of rapport with the people established.
2. (U) A number of significant, beneficial changes stand out. The construction of village police stations has to be one of the most significant. This, together with the staffing of these stations, has at last truly brought the police to the people. Even though the mobility of the village-level police is still way below standards, at least now the people have a definite place to go to seek assistance.
3. (C) Police communications and motorized patrols have also greatly enhanced the image of the National Police. For the first time, all 79 villages have a strong, reliable communications system. This has truly improved reaction capabilities. Likewise, it has materially assisted the reporting requirements which of course forms the basis of requirements for the police force. Motorized patrols are a reality in Tan An and on highways 4 and 5 twenty-four hours a day. The people know this; they see them and it has given them considerable confidence.
4. (C) One of the greatest problems facing the police is their personnel. For the most part, the individual policeman has neither the education nor the intellect to do his job. He neither truly understands his role nor does he fully comprehend what is required of him. The reason for this is that the police have not really been able to selectively pick their personnel, but, because of military manpower requirements, have had to take whatever they can get. Hopefully this situation can be alleviated shortly. If not, a few years from now by virtue of longevity, there may be a number of intellectually limited personnel in positions of responsibility beyond their capability.
5. (C) The use of the village police chief as the village deputy for security has not been very successful. Rank-wise, the Police Chief in many cases is junior to some of his subordinate commanders. In a class conscious society this just will not work. Additionally, without prior military service, he does not comprehend his duties regarding military security. And lastly, the Police Chief is normally not a resident of the Village and thus becomes immediately suspect to the people.
6. (C-HF) Other than the position of Province Chief and senior military commander, no other organization has such opportunities for graft and corruption as the police force. Buying and selling of job positions and nickel-and-dime taxation at village checkpoints is a way of life in Vietnam.

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Certainly this facet of life has become almost cultural in not only Vietnam, but all of this part of the world. But when this money changing exceeds certain unwritten limits it becomes corruption and can have only an adverse effect on the GVN. Such things as a high ranking member of the police force showing up with a newly purchased Volkswagen and building a new home conservatively estimated in excess of five million piasters must fall within this category. Possibly the police have an independent investigative branch. If not they should. If they do, then they should make their presence more apparent.

7. (C) The use and employment of the Marine Police has generally been poor. First, there simply are not enough of them to do the job required. Being such a small unit, they receive secondary emphasis among the police priorities. In two years time, I know of no major contribution they have made to the police effort. Either some emphasis should be placed on this police element at NPC level, or they should be changed organizationally.

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## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### 1. (U) Village self development:

The VSD program has certainly been a rousing success in Long An. Even though there was some confusion and turmoil concerning formation, duties and responsibilities of PCAG's, this has now been overcome by both experience and time. It has certainly achieved the goals of forcing the people together and demonstrating some assumption of responsibility by the village government. No obstacles that cannot be overcome are seen in reaching self-sufficiency in this program over the next two years. The only weak element remaining is RD credit and the approval of loans. Too often the loans go only to those with considerable collateral and the man just starting who needs the money is denied. The spirit of "high risk" loans must be more rigidly enforced and promulgated.

### 2. (U) (RD Cadre:

RD Cadre have proven extremely beneficial in Long An over the past few years primarily because of their motivation and organization. They have proven to be one of the most effective means of by-passing red-tape and rapidly getting to the people. Likewise, their work in the village office on procedural requirements has proven to be an invaluable assist in many villages.

### 3. (U) Local Government:

The two recent decrees published by the GVN for reorganization of village and hamlet governments have, in fact, considerably improved governmental procedures. Efficiency has increased many-fold. In addition, the new organization seems to be readily accepted by the people.

Peoples organizations have generally been a failure. Sufficient organizations have been formed and chartered to generally meet the goals, but this is a paperwork exercise. In fact, they do not really exist. At this point in time the people are not ready for the large number of organizations they have been placed into.

The Youth and sports program has also been a disappointment. This is probably the most poorly financed and the most fractionalized program today. Peoples organizations have youth programs, PSDF has youth programs, the schools have youth programs and the youth program has youth programs, the All of these semi-independent sources need a focal point, and both money-wise and organization-wise, I suggest the schools. This is certainly the most logical place.

In my two years in Long An, the single most disappointing program has been People's Information. The absolutely critical need for a dynamic propaganda/information campaign in the Vietnam environment is evident and obvious.

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Yet VIS has simply not been able to do the job. And as long as the direction of the programs, in minute detail, continues from Saigon, and as long as the people now in the program remain, it will never work. VIS meets and usually exceeds every goal assigned; yet they simply cannot relate to the people. Money has been used as an excuse for their failure, but inflexibility, lack of initiative and immaturity are the real reasons.

Revenue collection in 1972 increased dramatically over 1971 primarily due to the agricultural development fee tax. More important than the funds collected, however, was the attitude of the people to the new taxation program. Quite surprisingly, the attitude was not one of grumbling, but one of almost total acceptance. In addition, they seem to fully expect additional taxation in the same frame of mind.

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## CHIEU HOI

1. (U) The Chieu Hoi program out-lived its usefulness at province level in Long An two years ago. A small Chieu Hoi staff or service was necessary at province, but the continued maintenance of the Chieu Hoi center and the Chieu Hoi field offices at district were a waste of money. The Chieu Hoi center was designed to house 250 people. This center, which had an on-site staff of more than 30 people, has had an average monthly population of five to seven Hoi Chanh.

2. (U) Repeated attempts submitted by me and indorsed by DEPCORDS, MR3, to eliminate this center were unsuccessful. The Province Chief had hoped to move the agricultural technical school to the Chieu Hoi center and to colocate an agricultural experiment station with the schools. In a province that is 90% agrarian, this would have been a significant step forward. Perhaps now with the cease-fire, this plan can become a reality. In any case, the Chieu Hoi center and its attendant staffing is a waste and has been for some time.

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## REPORTS AND ANALYSIS

### 1. (U) Report Requirements:

Reporting requirements during 1972 were considerably reduced from 1971. To me the reports submitted in 1972 were much more appropriate and logical. Thus, at the end of my tour, I can honestly say I had no real objections to the recurring reports requirements.

As with recurring reports, an honest effort was made to reduce the "one time reports" by CORDS, MR3. I think they succeeded very well, and even though at times we felt we were swamped, this really was not the case on routine basis.

Special comments should be made on the HFS and TFES/TEARS. I honestly believe the HES lost a great deal of its veracity when turned-over to the GVN. One need see the wrath of the Province Chief and District Chief only once when the ratings declined from a previous month to understand the indirect pressure brought to bear on the VN HES officers. To deny that provincial officials did not believe their future was effected by the HES report is naive. There are other reasons that have caused doubt in the validity of the reports. First, province officials from the Province Chief on down cannot grasp the concept of computerized reports. What they do not understand in depth - they do not believe. Second, it is obvious that most of the HES officers take their reports from the District log and do not confirm or deny the activity in the villages. To do so might expose weaknesses in the district staff, all of whom outrank the HES officer, or might imply the District Chief has not been candid in his reporting to province. In fairness to the HES officers, they had no transportation to get to the village and no funds to defray the cost of public transportation. For the US Advisory Team to closely monitor the HES it meant we could only insure that those reports we had knowledge of were being included. Without DSA's and with the reduced province staff, there was no one who could spend the tremendous amount of time required to closely and accurately supervise the HES. The TFES was entirely too complex for the Vietnamese. Some of the data required they simply did not maintain. Other data they did not understand. The management by exception concept for TPARS was an excellent idea. If failed, however, for a number of reasons. In an effort to understand the system, and subsequently explain it to the Vietnamese, I had a team from MACCORDS for a briefing. The meeting ended with clarification on a number of points but left a host of question unanswered. For example, how can a unit conduct an "Independent-Independent" operations? If we could not understand it, it was obvious the Vietnamese could not understand it. The idea of MBE is good, and can be made to work, but there must be a new, fresh approach to the report.

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### 2. (U) Report Feedback:

The PRT surveys conducted both by Province and Region proved to be an extremely valuable report in convincing the province staff that minor changes in various programs were necessary. The reports throughout my tenure have been used time and again as factual evidence of program measurement. This is the type of information the Vietnamese understand. I thought the time allocated to the PSA to use these teams on his own projects was both sufficient and beneficial.

The PAAS was used as a valuable management tool by the US Advisory Team. This was the only document available that could be used as a yardstick to compare Long An with the nation as a whole. It gave us a valuable insight and many times served as a basis for a number of revisions of our programs.

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## PHUNG HOANG/PHOENIX/POPAT

1. (C) Rarely has any program had so much emphasis, had so many changes and proportionately accomplished so little. In almost two years time, I know of only two operations that were truly Phung Hoang operations. Both of these were conducted personally by the Province Chief. One was successful and one was not. This in no way implies we did not neutralize VCI. However, those that were neutralized were either accidental or part of a military operation performing another mission.
2. (C) The transfer of this program to the National Police was certainly a move in the right direction. However, the retention of a Phung Hoang administrative committee is superfluous. The change from a numerical goal to a by-name want list was a tremendous stride forward. However, the program is almost hopelessly stalled in bureaucratic paperwork. We have excellent bio-cards, beautifully lettered dossiers, and numerous charts. On the other hand, there are too many "secret" agents, little effort in the collection of hard intelligence, almost no collation and analysis, and rarely, if ever, any specific targetting. Since the withdrawal of the Americans, this program has floundered considerably. The subsequent integration into National Police activities, however, affords the only potential for future success.

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## AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1. (U) Public Health:

We are extremely proud of the public health program in Long An, especially at province and district level. The Province hospital, judged both by the physical facilities and care provided, has got to be at least equal to the best that any other province in South Vietnam can offer. I fully expect this hospital to continue to grow at about the same rate over the next two years.

Health care at district has continued to improve because of the Province Chief's use of military aid men for civilian care. Likewise, we have made significant improvement at village level. During the latter part of 1972, a recommendation was submitted by the Province Chief to eliminate the hamlet dispensaries. No answer has yet been received. This is certainly a valid recommendation and should be pursued.

### 2. (U) Education:

The public education program in Long An has been highly successful. Our problems in this area are probably not unique. There are not enough schools and there is a significant shortage of teachers. Control of education needs considerably more decentralization. Available lighting in schools is far below acceptable standards. Eye examinations should be conducted at the schools annually and the subjects of sanitation and safety in the early years must be stressed. To alleviate the teacher and school building shortage in Long An, the Province Chief has called on the RF soldiers. A number of schools have been constructed by RF troops using contributions and APF for financing. In those areas where there are no instructors, RF officers have been used as school teachers. Even though this has helped, it can only be called a very temporary solution at best.

### 3. (U) Public Works:

This service has improved tremendously over the past few years. It is an extremely valuable agency when properly employed because it provides tangible proof of the GVN serving the people. The work requirements, however, is almost unmeasurable and the capability is hampered by a lack of funding. It is in this general field, civil engineering, where the RF Engineer Companies discussed earlier would prove extremely beneficial. Likewise, the ARVN engineer units should be given greater responsibility in the field of public works. Even though restricted by money, there is still an untapped potential in this very important area that has not been totally utilized.

### 4. (U) Land Reform:

This program, and its associated, necessary military security, has done

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more in Long An to bring the people to the side of the GVN than any single program. An unqualified success. There are still problems associated with compensation payments, abandoned land and communal land, but even they cannot overshadow the support this program has had. A study of this program in Long An should be made for future historical reference and application.

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